

EXHIBIT

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Police officers are seen Beirut, Lebanon, on November 1, 2019. Lebanese journalist Mohammed Zbib was recently assaulted in Beirut. (Reuters/Goran Tomasevic)

Lebanese journalist Mohammed Zbib assaulted in Beirut

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In the evening of February 12, 2020, three unidentified individuals assaulted Mohammed Zbib, a reporter for the Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar, in the Beirut neighborhood of Hamra, according to news reports and a report by the journalist's employer.

Zbib was walking to his car when three people shouting insults began punching him and hitting him with a baton, according to *Al-Akhbar*. The assailants beat Zbib until he fell to the ground and then they fled the scene,

according to that report. He was taken to the American University Hospital where he was treated for minor injuries and was released at about 1 a.m. on February 13, according to *Al-Akhbar*.

On February 20, the Information Branch of the Internal Security Forces arrested three suspects in the attack, all of whom work for Marwan Khair al-Din, a former minister of state and the chairman of AM Bank, a leading Lebanese commercial bank, according to a report by *Al-Akhbar*.

One of the suspects, who was identified as Khair al-Din's head of security, confessed to the assault but denied that Khair al-Din had any involvement, according to *Al-Akhbar*. The suspect said they had attacked Zbib over his criticism of the bank chairman, according to that report.

Zbib has reported critically on Lebanese banks and capital flight, but CPJ could not find any recent articles he wrote that specifically mentioned Khair al-Din.

In a report on February 21, Lebanese daily *Al Modon* identified the suspects as Fadi Al-Asrawi, the head of security, and Ali Suwaid and Shadi Alam Al-Din.

In a statement sent via email to CPJ, Khair al-Din said that he was sorry that the attack occurred, and that he did not know his employees were involved until he was told by police. He said he had "taken all the needed measures to ensure that nothing of that nature ever happens again."

He added that he tried to apologize to Zbib personally for the behavior of his employees, but was not able to get in touch with him. He said he did not understand why Zbib would "point the finger to me as the person that planned his attack."

CPJ was not able to locate contact information for the suspects. Khair al-Din said the three were held for five days and have been released.

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